

About the HCWHA Mini-Grants Program

Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area mini-grants fund heritage tourism projects conducted by nonprofit organizations and government units within the [boundaries](#) of the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area (portions of Carroll, Frederick and Washington Counties). Grants range from \$500-\$5,000. The goal of the program is to develop new and innovative programs, exhibits, tours, events and other initiatives and to enhance existing heritage tourism products. Mini-grants fund non-capital expenses only and must be matched 1:1 with non-state dollars. Grant-funded projects should further the goals stated in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area Management Plan and the Five-Year Action Plan, available at heartofthecivilwar.org.

Sample grant-funded projects

- Researching, designing, and printing a walking tour brochure or interpretive marker
- Planning and materials for a commemorative event or educational public program
- Marketing expenses for a new or one-time event, festival, or program
- Conducting a study or plan of an historic resource that will be open to the public
- Creating a website for a nonprofit organization serving heritage travelers
- Stipends to cover professional development opportunities such as conferences or internships

Expenses not covered by mini-grants

- Administrative or operating costs for an established organization
- Material or labor costs for a bricks-and-mortar preservation project
- Research that will not benefit visitors/residents through heritage tourism products or sites

Application procedure

- Contact HCWHA staff to discuss the proposed project and seek feedback on application drafts at least two weeks prior to the deadline.
- Review the Heritage Area [Management Plan](#) and/or [Strategic Plan](#) (note: the Management Plan is broken into nine different sections. To search a PDF for a specific word, press Ctrl+F).
- Download the [application document](#) and complete the timeline, budget, and six narrative questions. Be sure to note the word limits and the matching requirements.
- Obtain letters of support or other supporting materials, if desired.
- Submit the [online application](#) by 5:00 PM on **Friday, November 1**.
- Be prepared to answer questions or send additional documentation, if required.
- Expect to receive grant results before the end of January, 2025.

Review criteria

Successful applications will make a strong case that a project:

- Is consistent with interpretive themes and/or suggested programs, projects, and activities in the [Management Plan](#) and/or [Strategic Plan](#).
- Enhances heritage tourism by visitors and residents
- Leverages other funding
- Demonstrates the ability of applicant to initiate, administer and complete a project
- Includes collaborative heritage partnerships (when applicable)

Eligibility and review guidelines

HCWHA Mini-Grant Guidelines | FY25

- The Heritage Area has a pool of \$25,000 available for mini-grants this year.
- Grants are made only to 501©3 nonprofit organizations and government units, not individuals.
- This is a matching grant program. Dollar-for-dollar matches are required. Any combination of cash and in-kind services (including discounts, volunteer time, and more) can make up the match. State of Maryland funds cannot be used as match.
- Projects do not have to relate 100% to the Civil War, but should address the heritage visitor experience.
- The grant period generally ends one calendar year after the grant is made (i.e., December 2025). Indicate if your project must extend past this timeframe and why.
- Indicate the basis for your costs—if you asked vendors for an estimate, used figures from a recent, similar project, etc.
- Be as specific as possible in your project timeline and budget.
- Long-term projects (signs, websites) are encouraged but you must demonstrate how you will maintain and sustain them. Mini-grants are usually one-time awards.
- In the narrative, explain how you would modify the scope of project if only partially funded.
- Salaries are eligible as cash match; however, only for that portion of a staff person's time dedicated solely to the grant-funded project (not recommended to exceed 35% of total required project match, but applications that use salaries as more than 35% of the total match will be considered).
- All interpretive signage projects must adhere to National Park Service or Civil War Trails standards for design. Contact HCWHA staff for further information about participating in Civil War Trails.
- All archaeological projects must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for archaeological documentation. https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_7.htm

Terms and conditions

- Mini-grants are reimbursable. The grantee must submit a final project report and copies of any product resulting from the mini-grant. The Grant award check will be issued to the grantee within 30 days of receipt of the completed report as described and approved by HCWHA.
- The grant award must be matched \$1: \$1 with any combination of cash and in-kind matching funds. Matching funds means financial support derived independently by the grantee to supplement the grant. Match can be in cash (expenditure of actual dollars) or in-kind (donations of services or goods that the grantee would have to pay for otherwise, including volunteer time).
- Projects must be completed within one year of grant approval, including submission of the final report. Failure to begin a project within one year of the grant agreement may result in cancellation of the mini-grant award. Projects that require more than one year for implementation may be considered as exceptions to the rule, but the project schedule in the grant proposal must make clear the anticipated project schedule.
- The Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and the Maryland Heritage Areas authority must be acknowledged on any materials produced or in publicity for the funded project, program or exhibit. **Failure to acknowledge as indicated may result in forfeiture of up to 100% of the mini-grant award.**
- Draft of any printed material shall be submitted to HCWHA for approval before completion.
- HCWHA reserves rights to use images and other materials connected with funded grant projects/programs/products.

For more information, contact Emily Huebner, Director of Operations and Programs, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area: emily@heartofthecivilwar.org, (240) 608-5177.

Goals stated in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area Management Plan

Economic Benefit

- Thematically link and market the area's heritage resources, thereby creating synergy among varied historic sites, recreational resources, and cultural assets.
- Support the creation of economic gains for new and current visitor-serving businesses within the heritage area by generating greater visitation; in so doing, deemphasize county borders and focus effort on the heritage area at large.
- Guide visitors to places of unique character, such as Main Street communities and small town centers that provide visitor services.

Stewardship

- Help stewardship and preservation organizations become more effective through networking and coordination of effort.
- Foster stronger appreciation for sacred historic places, pristine landscapes, crisp town edges, and one-of-a-kind historic, recreational, and cultural resources in the heritage area among residents – newcomers as well as long-time landowners – and their elected officials.
- Help the region and its communities plan for the future of historic resources, including managing development pressures on historic sites and their surrounding grounds. Connect those seeking conservation of sites, such as battlefields, with relevant organizations and programs.

Storytelling & Interpretation

- Expand on Maryland's status as a border state, in both geographical and ideological terms, to explore issues related to the Civil War period.
- Expand interpretive activities to the human-interest dimension of the conflict: differing views on secession, divided loyalties within families, how civilian life was impacted by the war, and the difficulties people faced afterward in returning to normal life.
- Continue to promote accuracy in information about Civil War military action and troop movement. Frame military actions within a national context, relating their importance to the outcome of major battles and of the war.

Coordination

- Foster a regional perspective that allows progress on heritage area goals regardless of jurisdiction.
- Serve as an umbrella organization for connecting and protecting the diverse, valuable heritage resources in the Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area and making its stories more accessible to visitors and residents.
- Support collaboration among the three counties' destination marketing organizations and other tourism marketing vehicles to facilitate regional marketing activities.